



Investigating the Challenges Faced by the Learners of English as a Second Language: Mixed-Method Design

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Abstract— Grammatical competence, or the capacity to comprehend and construct grammatically sound sentences, is the foundation of successful communication in every language. This study explored the challenges faced by Grade 11 STEM students at the University of Cebu Pardo and Talisay, Inc. in achieving grammar competence during the academic year 2024-2025. The research employed a mixed-method research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the students' linguistic weak points and lived experiences. The quantitative findings revealed varied levels of grammar proficiency among the 41 student respondents. While students demonstrated "Outstanding" mastery in determiners, their performance in subject-verb agreement, pronoun identification, and relative clauses "Did Not Meet Expectations". Notably, a critical gap was identified in prepositions, where students recorded a 0% correct average. For data analysis, the study utilized statistical treatment for quantitative data to determine frequencies, percentages, and the significant relationship between student profiles and grammar competence. For the qualitative phase, the Colaizzi method was used to analyze in-depth interviews, allowing the researcher to identify significant statements and formulate meanings that eventually clustered into the emergent themes. The main themes emerging from the qualitative analysis were: (1) Multifaceted Nature of English Grammar Acquisition, (2) How Experience and Deep Involvement Shape Us, (3) The Influence of the First Language (L1), and (4) Impact of Explicit Instruction and Learning Strategies. The qualitative results highlighted that students perceived grammar acquisition as a holistic challenge shaped by a complex interplay of internal and external elements. These themes underscored that L1 interference (specifically Bisaya) and the lack of exposure were primary hurdles, while interactive strategies such as games and real-world applications were seen as highly effective for retention. Based on these findings, a set of differentiated learning activities was proposed to enhance student performance. In conclusion, the study reveals that while students demonstrate mastery in certain fundamental areas, significant gaps in grammatical competence persist due to the complex interplay of first-language interference and a lack of immersion; consequently, it is recommended that educators adopt the proposed differentiated learning activities and interactive, strategy-based instruction to address these multifaceted linguistic challenges and foster a more holistic mastery of the English language.



Keywords— *Challenges of ESL Students, Differentiated Learning, Grammatical Competence, Colaizzi Method, Mixed Methods, Cebu City, Philippines.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Grammatical competence, or the capacity to comprehend and construct grammatically sound sentences, is the foundation of successful communication in every language. However, learners must overcome many obstacles to become proficient in grammar in a second language (L2). This study explores these issues to help teachers and curriculum creators improve L2 grammar education.

English has become a dominant language of instruction globally, yet its acquisition poses significant challenges for non-native speakers. These learners often face obstacles stemming from their learning environments, cultural differences, and, crucially, the influence of their native languages. This "mother tongue interference" can hinder the acquisition of English grammar, vocabulary, and syntax, as learners may unconsciously apply L1 rules and structures to the new language. Consequently, reliance on L1 knowledge can lead to comprehension difficulties and impede overall English proficiency. Therefore, understanding and addressing L1 interference is crucial for effective English language instruction for non-native speakers, as mentioned by Soomro (2022).

Diaubalick and Guijarro (2019) explained the significant impact of a learner's first language (L1) on second language (L2) acquisition, particularly in the domain of grammar, such as tense and aspect. Learners with L1s similar to the target L2, like Romance language speakers learning Spanish, benefit from existing linguistic overlap, facilitating easier acquisition. Conversely, learners with dissimilar L1s, such as German speakers learning Spanish, often transfer L1-based strategies, which can hinder the complete acquisition of certain L2 features. In this case, German speakers' reliance on adverbs to express aspect, a strategy from their L1, interferes with their ability to fully acquire Spanish verbal morphology for aspect. This L1 influence persists even with external factors like immersion, demonstrating the robust and enduring impact of prior linguistic knowledge on L2 learning.

Notable significant challenges to second language acquisition, specifically indicating that learners' lack of motivation and anxiety surrounding speaking impede their progress, as stated by Nkhi (2023). The observed scarcity of interactive classroom activities further exacerbates this issue by limiting language exposure and opportunities for practice. This lack of exposure directly contributes to communicative incompetence, hindering learners' ability to

use the language in real-world contexts effectively. Therefore, increasing interactive activities is crucial for providing necessary language exposure and fostering a more engaging learning environment. Balancing fluency and accuracy activities is also essential to develop well-rounded communicative competence, encompassing discourse, linguistic, interactional, and strategic skills.

Language learning is a complex process influenced by both cognitive and affective factors, with recent research increasingly emphasizing the crucial role of emotions. While cognitive factors were initially the primary focus of research, affective factors, particularly emotions and individual differences like self-confidence, are now recognized as pivotal. Emotions, defined as interactions between variables controlled by neural and hormonal systems, generate motivated behaviors and influence both positive and negative experiences. Krashen's affective filter hypothesis highlighted the role of emotions in language acquisition, suggesting that negative emotions can hinder learning. While positive emotions are generally encouraged, negative emotions like anxiety and fear, especially the fear of making mistakes in speaking, significantly impact learners' performance. Therefore, addressing and mitigating negative emotions is crucial for creating a more effective and comprehensible language learning environment. Ignoring these affective factors can destabilize the learning process (Salihoglu, 2024).

The central research gap addressed by this study in the local context of the University of Cebu Pardo and Talisay is the lack of a localized, evidence-based framework for developing differentiated learning activities in English grammar for Grade 12 STEM students. This gap stems from an insufficient understanding of the specific challenges these second language learners face, the affective and cognitive factors (such as L1 interference, motivation, and learning style preferences) that influence their grammar acquisition, and the effectiveness of current teaching strategies (interaction-based vs. explicit instruction) on their performance within the local setting. By connecting the theoretical support of the Dunn and Dunn Learning Styles Model and the institutional support of DepEd Order No. 35 with practical data, the study aims to fill this void by providing proposals for targeted, differentiated instructional materials for teachers.

Furthermore, the acquisition of L2 grammar is greatly impacted by individual learner variations, including age, motivation, learning preferences, and past language learning experience. For instance, cognitive

issues and ingrained L1 behaviors may provide distinct problems for adult learners than for younger ones. According to Dörnyei (2020), student motivation and attitudes about the target language and its culture are also important factors in determining how well they learn, including grammar.

The primary objective of this research was to thoroughly investigate the challenges faced by senior high school Grade 11 STEM students at the University of Cebu Pardo and Talisay in achieving grammar competence during the academic year 2024-2025 and, subsequently, to identify effective strategies and approaches to enhance their grammar acquisition, which served as the basis for developing differentiated learning activities in English. Specifically, the study sought to profile the students based on their age and gender, and to assess their current level of grammar competence concerning both interaction-based approaches and explicit grammar instruction. Furthermore, it aimed to pinpoint the key factors that influenced grammar acquisition, categorized as exposure, first language influence, and instructional strategies, and to determine the common difficulties students encountered. Finally, the research tested whether there was a significant difference between the teaching strategies utilized and the students' performance, concluding with the proposal of the aforementioned differentiated learning activities.

Theoretical Background

This research assumed that there were challenges faced by the learners in achieving the grammar competence of grade 11-STEM students in the University of Cebu, Pardo, and Talisay.

This research study was supported by Dunn and Dunn's Theory of Instruction and the Philippine DepEd Order No. 35, Series of 2016.

Theory of instruction. This theory highlights its emphasis on tailored education. The approach acknowledges that students have innate preferences for how they learn best and that when these preferences are acknowledged and accommodated, learning becomes more effective and interesting. Dunn and Dunn's theory takes a multidimensional method that categorizes student preferences into five essential elements. They also stressed the importance of moderating elements for learning, both internal and external influences. The internal factors are emotional, physiological, and psychological, while external factors are environmental and sociological.

Both factors are important for grammatical competence development because they impact how well students learn and practice language structures.

Internal factors: motivation and persistence (emotional). Motivated and persistent students are more likely to grapple with confusing grammatical rules, engage in practice tasks, and persevere when facing challenges. Information processing (psychological) and understanding a student's preferred processing method (analytic vs. global) might assist in adapting training. Analytic learners gain from breaking down grammatical principles step by step, but global learners may understand grammar better when provided in context or via pictures.

External factors: Environment (sensory), lighting, temperature, and noise can all have a substantial influence on attention and concentration. A well-managed atmosphere reduces distractions and helps pupils to focus their mental energy on mastering grammar. Instructional methods (Sociological): Some students learn grammar better through individual study, while others gain from group contact and conversations. Providing alternatives for chosen learning techniques promotes better comprehension and practice. Time of day (Physiological): Students who are more awake at a certain time of day may learn grammatical ideas more efficiently during those hours. Grammar courses that are intelligently scheduled can help students learn more effectively.

Philippine DepEd Order No. 35, Series of 2016. In line with the implementation of Republic Act No. 10533, also known as the Enhanced Basic Education Act, the Philippine Department of Education published the Education Act of 2013, a policy regarding the Learning Action Cell (LAC) as a school-based professional development strategy for improving teaching and learning. The policy intends to facilitate the continuous professional development of its teaching personnel based on the notion of lifelong learning and the department's commitment to enhancing the instructor's potential.

The Department of Education prepares to promote and safeguard the rights of Filipinos who are entitled to quality basic education that is egalitarian, culturally relevant, and comprehensive. As a result, they reach their full potential and contribute to the nation's development. DepEd also acknowledges that quality learning is vital. Significantly impacted by quality instruction in the classroom. Therefore, it is critical to recruit highly competent teachers and encourage their professional development as they advance in their careers.

A Learning Action Cell (LAC) consists of educators who participate in collaborative and unified learning sessions to address shared issues faced in the school, assisted by the school head or a designated LAC leader. LACs will develop into constructive school-based communities of practice and caring and safe environments.

Key parts of the approach include continual collaboration. Learning or problem-solving within a common sphere of professional interest, self-directed learning, reflective practice resulting in action and self-evaluation, and collective competency. To enhance the teaching-learning process, which will result in improved learning among learners, promote great instructors, and empower them to encourage each other to consistently enhance their skills and instructional expertise. Practice, abilities, and attitudes, and developing a professional collaborative atmosphere as a whole are the objectives of this policy. During the LAC sessions, the outcome of this current investigation may be shared.

In conclusion, assessing the Dunn and Dunn Learning Styles Model in the context of this study on grammar learning by second language learners is valuable. Understanding learners' diverse preferences for environmental, instructional, emotional, and social components of learning allows researchers to investigate how various styles may impact the obstacles children experience when studying language.

This information may then be utilized to create focused teaching techniques that cater to these various learning styles, perhaps leading to more successful strategies for obtaining grammatical competence in second-language learners.

Hence, the Dunn and Dunn Learning Style model and DepEd Order No. 35, Series of 2016, were strong supporting frameworks for this study because both addressed the diverse learning needs of English as a second language students and provided a practical avenue for teachers to implement differentiated instruction. The Dunn and Dunn model, by highlighting individual learning preferences across environmental, emotional, sociological, and physiological elements, identifies specific learning obstacles ESL learners face. DepEd Order No. 35, through its promotion of Learning Action Cells (LACs), offers a collaborative platform for teachers to share best practices, reflect on their teaching methods, and develop targeted interventions based on these individual needs. This combined approach supports the investigation of how teachers can leverage LACs to implement strategies catering to various learning styles, ultimately impacting the effectiveness of ESL instruction and student performance.

Statement of the problem

This research delved into the challenges faced by senior high school grade-11 STEM students at the University of Cebu Pardo and Talisay during the academic year 2024-2025 in achieving grammar competence and identified potential strategies and approaches to enhance

grammar acquisition as a basis for differentiated learning activities in English.

Specifically, it answered the following questions:

1. What are the profiles of the students in terms of:
 - 1.1 age, and
 - 1.2 gender?
2. What is the grammar competence of the students in terms of:
 - 2.1 subject-verb-agreement
 - 2.2 relative clause,
 - 2.3 preposition,
 - 2.4 pronoun,
 - 2.5 verb,
 - 2.6 conjunction, and
 - 2.7 determiners?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the respondents' profiles and grammar competence?
4. What are the common challenges students encounter in acquiring grammar competence?
 - 4.1 exposure,
 - 4.2 first language influence, and
 - 4.3 instructional strategies?
5. What are the effective strategies for enhancing the grammar competence of respondents?
 - 5.1 interaction-based instruction, and
 - 5.2 explicit grammar instruction?
6. Based on the findings, what differentiated learning activities in English can be proposed?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section presents the related literature that strengthens the study. Alaviyya and Babayev (2023) emphasized that learning a second language is not simple. Acquiring English as a second language is significantly more challenging, especially if you are studying English in a country where English is not the official language. A shift to using English as the medium of instruction is likely to be accompanied by linguistic challenges (Galloway & Ruegg, 2020).

Some of the most common challenges faced by language learners, particularly non-native speakers, include a limited vocabulary that limits their ability to fully express themselves, the difficulty of constructing grammatically correct sentences, the sheer vastness of the English language with its many variations, and the fact that

the language itself evolves. Moses and Mohammad (2019) found that students struggle to develop strong writing skills due to the inherent complexities of English grammar and vocabulary. Errors in subject-verb agreement become increasingly prevalent, and it appears that many individuals are either no longer aware of the rules or just diminish the relevance of grammatical rules as long as they can deliver their point. Sioco and De Vera (2018), as well as Alaviyya and Babayev (2023), stated that one of the reasons why this problem is difficult to address, because of untrained teachers, is that most nations have English language learners, making it difficult to determine who is a proficient English teacher and who is unskilled. Students just accept everything the teacher teaches, whether it is right or wrong. Instances like these might generate confusion among students since different instructors tell them different things.

One of the primary reasons for this issue is the difficulties that instructors confront when translating or interpreting from their mother tongues to the target language. Babayev and Nuri (2023) found that unqualified or uninspiring teachers can stifle student motivation, while a lack of resources can hinder the learning process. Perhaps the most detrimental factor, however, is teacher domination, which prevents students from actively engaging with the language and practicing their skills. Al-khreshah and Orak (2021) added that negative factors that originate from a teacher include teachers failing to correct students' pronunciation, teachers being too lazy to correct students' pronunciation, whether the students' pronunciation is accurate or bad, and teachers being unaware that pronunciation is vital in English communication. Effective instructors can impact their pupils' success in a variety of ways. Specifically, Palou (2020) argues that teachers have a substantial influence on molding learners' knowledge of English grammar. Alqahtani (2022) added that it is significant for English teachers to have a basic knowledge of language acquisition theories, as it directly influences their ability to provide appropriate content instructions.

According to Kamasak et al. (2020), when it comes to grammar, the route to near-native fluency can carry potential drawbacks. The expectation of mimicking native speakers can put a lot of strain on trainees. This relentless pursuit of grammatical correctness can be frustrating, especially for those still learning the complexities of English structure. The immensity and intricacies of the language itself provide another element of complexity. Mastering all the complexities of English grammatical rules, including exceptions and variants, may be a daunting task. This pressure, along with the sheer volume of knowledge, can cause learners to feel anxious

and discouraged, thus impeding their development. (Tran, 2020) High speaking rates and unusual terminology may influence learners' listening and understanding. Additionally, in parsing issues, Indonesian students have experienced difficulties in understanding syntactic and semantic structures (Winarta & Rahmanu, 2020). Particular errors children commit, such as the misuse of articles, prepositions, and verb tenses. These findings imply that effectively teaching learners English grammar necessitates specialized ways to overcome these typical syntax issues.

As claimed by Aizawa et al. (2023), the vitality of the English language is vital for academic achievement. A key component of this ability is developing excellent grammatical skills. However, this itinerary is packed with pitfalls. English grammar, with its intricacies, exceptions, and variants, may be a major challenge for students. Mastering verb conjugations, accurate tense use, subject-verb agreement, and other grammatical principles requires dedication and practice. Furthermore, a learner's original language might impact their English grammar. Differences in sentence structure, word order, and grammatical ideas might make it difficult to transmit information and achieve fluency with proper grammar. Finally, insufficient exposure to grammatically accurate English might impede growth. Learners who lack opportunities to hear and practice spoken English with good grammar may struggle to build fluency, reflecting excellent grammar skills.

Nevertheless, obtaining fluency has several benefits that go beyond academic performance. First and foremost, fluency strengthens communication. Imagine being able to communicate effectively and confidently in a global language, allowing you to interact with individuals from all backgrounds. Second, fluency improves professional opportunities. In today's linked world, multilingualism is a great skill in several areas. Employers are increasingly looking for workers who can successfully interact across cultures. Finally, fluency leads to a better comprehension of another culture. Language is inextricably related to culture, and acquiring fluency helps you to dive into its complexities, appreciate its literature, and get a better perspective on the globe as a whole.

As learners transition back to traditional classrooms with live teachers, a welcome change after the pandemic's remote learning era, a crucial challenge emerged: the impact of limited interaction on language acquisition. Many learners who spent significant time studying online may now struggle with aspects of language learning that rely heavily on in-person interaction. The student's motivation and limited language exposure hinder learners' progress.

As explained by Nanquil (2021), beyond the logistical changes of returning to the classroom, a significant challenge lies in rekindling student motivation for grammar acquisition. The shift to online learning during the pandemic might have created a gap in their confidence and enthusiasm. Some students may now dislike grammar lessons, fearing they might not be able to participate actively or produce grammatically correct work after a period of potentially less structured online learning. This lack of motivation can be a significant hurdle, hindering their progress in mastering grammar skills. Furthermore, the pandemic itself likely restricted students' exposure to environments where they could practice and hear proper English grammar use. Limited opportunities to engage in conversations, listen to lectures, or read complex texts in person can make it more difficult for them to internalize grammatical rules effectively.

Based on the study by Reyes et al. (2021), exposed indigenous learners to conversational English problems. Include the perspective that they have difficulties with the English language. For instance, having a weak linguistic vocabulary. Their problems include their anxieties and lack of confidence. Learners cope with their issues by conducting research and observing people on television. They also consult the dictionary. The researchers suggested the module will be utilized by indigenous pupils, including grammar, writing, reading, and vocabulary, as additional activities for the pupils where they can boost their speaking abilities, confidence, vocabulary, and understanding of English.

According to Adharbi (2021), mastering a language might feel like breaking a complicated code. The sheer number of rules, exceptions, and variations in a language such as English may be intimidating. This lack of evident and intuitive structure is a significant impediment to gaining grammatical competence. If pupils do not comprehend the basic logic of grammatical rules, they will have difficulties applying them successfully in their language use. Concerning this, several grammatical mistakes and problems arose among students when learning English due to their lack of knowledge and experience with lexis and grammar in their daily lives. Ajaj (2022), according to the research findings, students continue to struggle with learning the English language, particularly its grammar, and they need to improve at the grammatical, semantic, and pragmatic levels that manifest in their spoken or written language. A descriptive methodology was utilized in this research by reviewing the previous literature.

As believed by Djurayeva et al. (2020), learners face various barriers and challenges in acquiring grammar competence. However, the researchers highlighted in the

study that there are a few creative methods for enhancing the learners' progress, such as diagramming sentences, deductive teaching, and interactive teaching. By engaging students visually, encouraging them to discover grammar rules through exploration, and fostering interaction, these methods transform grammar from a code to be deciphered into a skill to be actively practiced and mastered.

Concerned about a reduction in student writing quality, this study looked into the obstacles that first-year university students confront in Kenya. The study revealed two major concerns through content analysis of 50 students' essays: content issues, such as concept organization and growth, and structural issues with language, punctuation, and sentence structure. The study's goal is to use these data to create techniques for helping students improve their academic writing skills (Mwangi, 2017).

In Indonesia, as explained by Sorohiti et al. (2024), where English is not the native language, teachers struggle to make grammar fascinating for learners. This qualitative study conducted interviews with instructors to better understand these problems. According to the findings, the most significant barriers were a lack of enthusiasm and inadequate language exposure. Teachers address this using engaging strategies such as guided sentence creation and games, which make grammar instruction more interesting and effective. In line with the study, Batubara & Mahardhika's (2020) research conducted at an Indonesian institution found that many fourth-semester English students had difficulty transitioning from active to passive voice. The most prevalent challenges discovered were determining the subject, utilizing the auxiliary verb "be," and generating the past participle of verbs, especially in the past continuous tense. While some students displayed a good understanding of passive voice, the study shows that grammar training should be enhanced to meet these specific issues.

Rahmotullah (2020) highlighted that the amount and level of grammatical competency necessary for effective higher education are rarely addressed in the formal academic English teaching system. So, a huge gap was observed in the grammar teaching. Currently, the upper secondary education system level, the appropriate degree of grammatical instruction, and the necessary degree of grammatical instruction are lacking for effective grammar instruction. Consequently, the learners, higher secondary students, have been struggling in both their academics and their future careers. To fill the gap, researchers improve the Higher Secondary Grammar Teaching System by designing and implementing it based

on the current situations and requirements of our young ones.

The study investigated the challenges faced by teachers in achieving students' spoken English fluency in the Philippines. Despite a national policy emphasizing communicative language teaching, students aren't reaching the desired level of proficiency. The study explores the gap between policy and practice, suggesting that teachers struggle with a dilemma: adhering to policy or finding more effective methods. By examining the experiences of 30 teachers through observation and interviews, the research aims to identify solutions for both teachers and policymakers to improve the quality of English language education and achieve true communicative competence among students (Azam et al., 2021).

In the study by Nadesan and Shah (2020), Malaysian students struggle to speak English confidently, despite years of practice. This study reveals non-linguistic problems such as nervousness, lack of confidence, and fear of making errors that limit their capacity to talk.

According to Daar (2020), students have little enthusiasm for learning to speak English. This aspect makes individuals unwilling to learn. It also disrupts the students' learning attention. Quinones (2022) challenges that have been faced while mastering grammar involve remembering the rules. Integrating the rules themselves. Grammar is an area wherein you need to follow a certain guideline to express what you want to say. Celi & Kocaman (2016) discussed numerous obstacles that make gaining grammatical precision difficult for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. Traditional grammar education techniques and insufficient exposure to actual English usage might impede fluency and correctness. Learners' native languages (L1) may interfere with their grasp of English grammar, resulting in problems in word order and sentence structure.

Language anxiety can restrict students' ability to acquire grammar and prior knowledge, and encountering unusual terms is also an important hurdle for students in developing linguistic competency.

As believed by Olagbaju (2021), prior knowledge has an important role in second language learning. Prior knowledge refers to all of a learner's applicable abilities, aptitude, and know-how before encountering a new body of knowledge or information. Previous experience assists in memory or transfer of knowledge, and it might take the shape of either misunderstandings or alternate ideas. Research in the field of learning engagement, Dong et al. (2020, examined the effect of previous knowledge on grammar acquisition utilizing the idea of cognitive load. The findings indicate that learners with more previous

knowledge had a lower cognitive strain when encountering new grammatical structures.

Research done at SMPN 1 Baki during the 2023/2024 academic year looked into the problems that instructors experience when offering grammar teaching. The study found three main challenges: choosing appropriate teaching techniques, inspiring students to interact with grammar, and ensuring a thorough knowledge of the content (Muhamad, 2023). These findings illustrate the difficulty of developing grammatical competence in kids.

While writing skills are frequently highlighted, grammar serves as the basis for clear and successful communication. When your writing feels awkward or cumbersome, it's usually a clue that you need to brush up on your grammar. Solid grammar serves as the framework that supports your ideas, ensuring that they are presented in an intelligible and interesting manner for the reader.

In the study (Lee, 2020), numerous issues were associated with grammar understanding and its impact on writing effectiveness. First, it acknowledges the past lack of attention on writing teaching, which has resulted in a skills gap among students. This disconnect is exacerbated by the multifarious nature of writing, which necessitates not just grammatical expertise but also idea production, organization, and vocabulary selection (Febriana, 2022). Identifies grammar application as a specific area of difficulty that may contribute to pupil demotivation. Overall, a lack of emphasis on grammatical understanding is cited as a serious impediment to developing writing skills that also impact acquiring grammar competence.

The literature study identifies many problems that learners experience when developing grammatical competence. These include the intrinsic complexity of the English language, insufficient exposure to grammatically accurate English, and the bad impacts from teachers. Additionally, learners' native languages may interfere with their comprehension of English grammar. On the other hand, other research indicates that innovative teaching approaches and a concentration on real-world English use can help learners overcome these obstacles. Overall, the findings emphasize the significance of excellent grammar education in building strong writing abilities.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section presents the design, flow of the study, environment, respondents, instrument, data-gathering procedures, data analysis, statistical treatment, and scoring procedures.

Design

This study employed a mixed-method research design, which integrated both quantitative and qualitative data to achieve its objectives. The quantitative phase focused on identifying the weak points of Grade 11 STEM senior high school students in grammar acquisition, achieved through the distribution of a descriptive questionnaire to 41 student participants. This phase also aimed to determine the significant relationship between the students' demographic profiles and their grammar competence. The qualitative phase utilized an intensive questionnaire (semi-structured interview) with two groups. Five English teachers were interviewed to determine the effective pedagogical strategies and, more specifically, to ascertain whether students learn best through explicit or interactive instruction in grammar. Concurrently, nine students were randomly selected from the 41 questionnaire respondents and interviewed to gain deeper qualitative insight into their grammar acquisition challenges and learning preferences.

Flow of the Study

Figure 2 presents the flow of the study, which covered the entire research activity. The input considers the potential weaknesses of the students for acquiring grammar competence, the significant relationship between students' profiles and grammar competence, and the challenges or barriers in grammar acquisition. Included in the process are the distribution of a survey questionnaire, data collection, an in-depth questionnaire administered through Google Forms, statistical treatment, analysis, and interpretation of data. The findings of the study are the basis for proposing differentiated learning activities in English.

Locale of the Study

This study was conducted at the University of Cebu Pardo and Talisay (UC-PT), which offered the English subject, for which the teaching strategies involved in the study are to be utilized by the English teachers in this subject. UC-PT is located at Natalio B. Bacalso Ave., Cebu South Road, Brgy. Bulacao Pardo, Cebu City, 6000. The school offers a K-12 basic education program that has both junior and senior high schools. The senior high school department offers academic tracks such as Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), Accountancy, Business, and Management (ABM), and General Academics (GAS). Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS). University of Cebu Pardo and Talisay also offer bachelor's degrees such as BSSED, BEED, BSN, BSIT, and more.

Respondents

The University of Cebu- Pardo and Talisay senior high school Grade-11 Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) students were the respondents. STEM is one of the academic strands offered by the school. The descriptive survey method was utilized in the study. Specifically, there were 41 students from UCPT. Five teachers from the same school were also the informants of this study. It had a total of 46 respondents. They were given a survey questionnaire to identify the weaknesses in acquiring grammar competence.

Then, the English teachers utilized the teaching strategies for their students in their English classes. The collaborative participation of the respondents greatly contributed to the attainment of the study's objectives.

The Grade 11 STEM students were selected using purposive sampling because they represent a critical population requiring a high level of grammatical competence for success in tertiary education and their science-focused field. Their final-year status allowed the researchers to access their recent performance history and established learning preferences (per the Dunn and Dunn model). Ultimately, targeting this specific group at the University of Cebu Pardo and Talisay ensured that the study's main output—the differentiated learning activities—was maximally relevant and effective for a defined, high-stakes academic population.

Data-gathering Procedure

In this process, the different phases in the data-gathering procedure were presented. Ethics forms were first submitted to the UC Banilad Research Office for the confidentiality of the respondents. A letter of request was then given to the school principal/Campus Affairs Director (CAD) asking permission to use the University of Cebu Pardo and Talisay, respectively, as the locale of the study. When the school principal/CAD granted permission, a letter of request was sent to the English teachers of the student respondents, asking them about potential approaches or strategies to use to improve students' grammar proficiency and the challenges or barriers in grammar acquisition. After the permission was granted, arrangements with the respondents on the date of the administration of the questionnaires were made. Retrieval of data was done right after the administration.

Data Analysis

The themes were derived through a rigorous qualitative methodology, specifically Colaizzi's method, which was deemed appropriate for the content analysis of the qualitative data. The researcher diligently adhered to the following seven steps, ensuring the data was regularly

reviewed, verified, and bracketed throughout the process to maintain reliability and accuracy.

The theme derivation process unfolded as follows:

First, the researcher used an online platform (Google Forms) to collect all responses, which were then transcribed verbatim. The researcher repeatedly reread the transcriptions to achieve immersion and a comprehensive sense of the data.

Second, the transcripts were thoroughly examined to select and analyze crucial words or statements provided by the respondents. This allowed the researcher to pinpoint the significant statements that directly related to the study's phenomenon.

Third, formulated meanings were created based on the accumulated significant statements. This step required the researcher to continuously rely on and compare the initial transcripts, the crucial statements, and the developed interpretations from each respondent to ensure fidelity.

Fourth, the constructed explanations formulated meanings were grouped into emergent themes. The researcher thoroughly checked and compared each transcription and theme cluster, ensuring the reliability and accuracy of the resulting themes.

Fifth, the findings were utilized to construct a full and detailed statement and description of the participants' lived experiences regarding the phenomenon under investigation.

Sixth, to ensure the consistency and validation of the data, the researcher went over the full description with the involved participants who took part in the study.

Finally, to achieve absolute fidelity with the respondents' lived experiences, the researcher considered any fresh and relevant information extracted from the respondents' final validation, thereby finalizing the fundamental structure of the themes.

Treatment of Data

A total of forty-one (41) student participants answered the quantitative survey questionnaire. The data gathered from the quantitative part of this research, specifically the participant performance scores, were treated using descriptive statistics to summarize and describe the characteristics of the sample.

Since the study's objective is to assess the participants' level of performance, the primary statistical tool utilized was the Percentage Average Method. This method provides a clear, standardized measure of performance relative to the highest possible score, allowing for straightforward interpretation of the results.

The following formula was used to calculate the average percentage of the participants' scores:

where P = Percentage

n= number of respondents

f is the frequency of correct answers

$$P = \frac{f}{n} \times 100$$

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presents the gathered quantitative data analyzed through descriptive statistics and an intensive or in-depth questionnaire. The qualitative data analysis is based on the written transcripts of the five teachers and nine students, and forty-one students for descriptive purposes. The data are collected from a survey questionnaire and Google Form interviews with open-ended questions.

Table 1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

n=41

The demographic profile of the 41 respondents reveals a group that is slightly more female than male.

Profile	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex		
Male	18	43.90%
Female	23	56.10%
Age		
16	24	58.54%
17	17	41.46%

Specifically, 23 of the respondents were female, accounting for 56.09% of the sample, while 18 respondents were male, representing 43.90%. In terms of age, the respondents were either 16 or 17 years old. The majority of the participants, 24 individuals, were 16 years old, making up 58.54% of the total. The remaining 17 respondents were 17 years old, constituting 41.46% of the sample. Therefore, the study participants were primarily female and predominantly 16 years of age.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics Questionnaire

Questions	Frequency	Percentage	Transmuted	Interpretation
1. The economic and social initiatives contained in the new bill _____ our future well-being, according to a government spokesperson.	28	68.29%	80	Satisfactory
2. The finance committee _____ a new report for each meeting, outlining recent spending and earnings.	29	70.73%	81	Satisfactory
3. The relevant financial data _____ compiled by the team over an intense week of research and evaluation.	8	19.51%	81	Satisfactory
4. Each member and team leader _____ committed to working together to meet the new deadline.	9	21.95%	64	Did Not Meet Expectations
5. A number of the people who were rescued from the burning building _____ been hospitalized for smoke inhalation, but the exact number _____ not been determined.	22	53.66%	73	Did Not Meet Expectations
6. At Botanical Bay, a tide pool full of sea anemones, clams, and sea urchins also _____ a small starfish.	21	51.22%	72	Did Not Meet Expectations
7. After Kai's parties, most of the people _____ willing to stay and help clean up.	27	65.85%	78	Fairly Satisfactory
8. The teacher explained that there _____ several effective approaches to creating a thesis statement.	31	75.61%	84	Satisfactory
9. Each instance of bullying or intimidation in children under school age _____ long-term effects on the socialization process.	20	48.78%	72	Did Not Meet Expectations
10. Jostling for position by the stage with cameras poised _____ the dancers' adoring parents.	30	73.17%	83	Satisfactory
11. Which relative pronoun cannot be used in an adding relative clause?	9	21.95%	65	Did Not Meet Expectations
12. Which preposition is used with dates?	0	0.00%	60	Did Not Meet Expectations
13. Which word is a reflexive pronoun?	19	46.34%	71	Did Not Meet Expectations
14. Which verb is the past perfect form?	20	48.78%	72	Did Not Meet Expectations
15. Which modal verb expresses ability?	35	85.37%	90	Outstanding

16.Which phrase is the passive form?	12	29.27%	67	Did Not Meet Expectations
17.I _____ working all afternoon and have just finished the assignment.	16	39.02%	69	Did Not Meet Expectations
18.Rohan _____ before he read the review.	16	39.02%	69	Did Not Meet Expectations
19.He _____ in the States but he still does not have a command over the English language.	30	73.17%	83	Satisfactory
20. By the next month, we shall _____ the project.	27	65.85%	78	Fairly Satisfactory
21.Every boy and girl _____ in the class today.	12	29.27%	67	Did Not Meet Expectations
22.Identify the tense used in the sentence. 'Here comes the soon-to-be bride!'	9	21.95%	65	Did Not Meet Expectations
23.Identify the tense used in the following sentence. "We are going to reach the destination as scheduled."	4	9.76%	62	Did Not Meet Expectations
24.Our friends visit us _____ they are free.	40	97.56%	98	Outstanding
25.I saw Helen _____ she was getting off the bus.	41	100.00%	100	Outstanding
26.I can neither sing _____ dance.	37	90.24%	93	Outstanding
27.I missed the bus _____ I arrived late for the meeting.	34	82.93%	89	Very Satisfactory
28.After this tour, you have _____ whole afternoon free to explore the city.	29	70.73%	81	Satisfactory
29.Carol's father works as _____ electrician.	34	83.93%	89	Very Satisfactory
30.Their car does 140 miles _____ hour.	36	87.80%	92	Outstanding
31.Where's _____ USB drive I lent you last week?	41	100.00%	100	Outstanding
32.I _____ arrange the flowers for the bouquet.	34	82.93%	89	Very Satisfactory
33.If Suzan said that, it _____ true. She never lies.	32	78.05%	86	Very Satisfactory
34.I'm not sure I trust Peter. He _____ the person we think he is.	7	17.07%	64	Did Not Meet Expectations
35.Paul is behaving in a very unusual way. I think he _____ again.	37	92.68%	95	Outstanding

This table presents the results of the survey questionnaire, detailing the frequency and percentage of responses for each question, along with a transmuted score and an interpretation.

The survey questionnaire results reveal varied understandings of English language concepts among the student respondents. While certain areas demonstrated strong comprehension, as evidenced by the "Outstanding" and "Very Satisfactory" interpretations for questions

concerning modal verbs, conjunctions, prepositions, and verb tenses, other areas indicate a significant need for improvement. Specifically, a substantial number of questions, interpreted as "Did Not Meet Expectations," highlight difficulties in subject-verb agreement, the identification of specific pronoun types, verb tenses, and the relative clause. Notably, no student correctly identified the preposition used with dates. The "Satisfactory" and "Fairly Satisfactory" responses suggest a moderate level of

understanding in some grammatical structures. The transmuted scores generally align with the percentage of correct answers, providing a numerical representation of student performance on each question. Overall, the survey data suggest that while the students have grasped some English language concepts effectively, there are critical areas where their understanding is weak and requires targeted educational intervention.

The students' overall performance in the grammar survey paints a complex, yet familiar, picture for second language educators. While the results commendably demonstrate a grasp of certain functional concepts, such as modal verbs and conjunctions, the data simultaneously illuminates critical and persistent gaps, mirroring challenges long recognized in the field of English as a Second Language (ESL) acquisition. The significant struggles observed in Subject-Verb Agreement (SVA), for example, are highly consistent with research identifying this structure as one of the most resistant to complete mastery across various proficiency levels. Similarly, the widespread difficulties with verb tenses and the core problem of applying correct aspectual rules directly affirm existing literature on the subject, particularly noting the complicating factor of first language (L1) interference (Diaubalick & Guijarro, 2019). Furthermore, the notably low scores in prepositions and complex structures like the relative clause are predictable, as prepositions are notoriously irregular and frequently succumb to L1 transfer errors (Soomro, 2022). Ultimately, the survey serves as a vital diagnostic tool, validating the necessity for focused, strategic instructional intervention to solidify these fundamental grammatical building blocks.

Table 3 Grammatical Concepts

SUBJECT- VERB- AGREEMENT				
Questions	Frequency	Percentage	Transmuted	Interpretation
No. 1-10	225	54.88	73	Did Not Meet Expectations
RELATIVE CLAUSE				
No. 11	9	21.95	65	Did Not Meet Expectations
PREPOSITION (P.O.S)				
No. 12	0	0	0	Did Not Meet

				Expectations
PRONOUN (P.O.S)				
No.13	19	46.34%	71	Did Not Meet Expectations
VERB (P.O.S)				
No. 14-23	181	44.15	71	Did Not Meet Expectations
CONJUNCTION (P.O.S)				
No. 24-27	152	92.68	95	Outstanding
DETERMINERS (P.O.S)				
No. 28-31	140	85.37	90	Outstanding
MODAL VERBS (P.O.S)				
No. 32-35	110	67.07	79	Fairly Satisfactory

The analysis of student responses specifically for questions 1 through 10, which focused on subject-verb agreement, indicates that this is an area of difficulty for the respondents. With a total frequency of 225 correct answers across these ten questions, the average percentage of correct responses was 54.88%, resulting in a transmuted score of 73. According to the interpretation provided, this level of performance falls under "Did Not Meet Expectations." This suggests that, on average, the students struggled with the principles of subject-verb agreement tested in the initial part of the survey. Therefore, it can be concluded that the respondents need further instruction and practice to improve their understanding and application of subject-verb agreement rules.

The focused analysis on Subject-Verb Agreement (SVA) items (Questions 1-10) confirmed that this grammar point is a major hurdle, with an average score of 54.88%, resulting in an interpretation of "Did Not Meet Expectations." This low mastery level is strongly supported by academic literature, which consistently identifies SVA as one of the most persistent and problematic structures for English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. This difficulty is often compounded by interference from students' native language when they attempt to apply L1 rules to English (Soomro, 2022). In

essence, the data validates a well-known challenge in L2 pedagogy, signaling an urgent need for targeted instruction to improve the practical application of these SVA rules.

The data for Question 11, which assessed understanding of relative clauses, reveals a significant challenge for the student respondents. With only 9 correct answers out of the total, the percentage of correct responses was a low 21.95%, resulting in a transmuted score of 65. Consequently, the interpretation of this performance is "Did Not Meet Expectations." This singular data point strongly suggests that the students in this group have a weak grasp of the specific concept of relative clauses tested in Question 11. This indicates a need for focused instruction and review of relative clauses to improve student comprehension.

The extremely low 21.95% correct response rate for Question 11 on relative clauses indicates a clear and substantial deficiency, warranting an interpretation of "Did Not Meet Expectations." This specific difficulty is a recognized challenge in second language acquisition, as the mastery of complex syntactic structures is a major hurdle for English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. The struggle with relative clauses aligns with the broader problem of "mother tongue interference," in which learners' native-language rules interfere with the acquisition of complex English syntax, vocabulary, and grammar (Soomro, 2022). Furthermore, given the low score, this item provides empirical data supporting the established finding that many students struggle with their overall grammatical competence, the foundational capacity to construct grammatically sound sentences (Sioco & De Vera, 2018). Consequently, this singular data point confirms the need for targeted pedagogical intervention to strengthen students' comprehension and application of complex clause structures.

The data concerning Question 12, which assessed knowledge of prepositions as a part of speech, reveals a critical gap in understanding among the student respondents. With 0 correct answers (0% of responses), the resulting transmuted score is also 0. Consequently, the interpretation of this performance is "Did Not Meet Expectations." This outcome underscores a complete lack of understanding of the specific prepositional concept tested in this question among the surveyed group. This finding highlights a significant weakness in their grammatical knowledge, necessitating focused attention and instruction on prepositions.

The finding for Question 12—which assessed a specific prepositional concept and resulted in zero correct answers (0%)—highlights a critical and absolute comprehension failure, immediately leading to an

interpretation of "Did Not Meet Expectations." This outcome provides strong empirical confirmation of a challenge long acknowledged in language pedagogy. The acquisition of English prepositions is notoriously difficult for English as a Second Language (ESL) learners due to the lack of clear, logical rules; the high number of meanings (polysemy); and the propensity for errors caused by transferring L1 rules. As Rahmotullah (2020) observed, such persistent, deep-seated difficulties in foundational grammar points present significant problems in teaching English at the secondary level, demanding specific analysis and focused solutions. Consequently, this data point necessitates immediate, concentrated instructional effort to address the complete absence of mastery in this particular area of grammatical knowledge.

The data for Question 13, which assessed knowledge of pronouns as a part of speech, indicates that the student respondents faced challenges in this area. With a frequency of 19 correct answers, representing 46.34% of the total responses, the resulting transmuted score was 71. According to the provided interpretation, this level of performance "Did Not Meet Expectations." This suggests that most students did not correctly identify the concept of pronouns tested in this question, highlighting a potential weakness in their understanding of this part of speech. Therefore, further review and instruction on pronouns may be beneficial for this group of students.

The data for Question 13, which assessed knowledge of pronouns as a part of speech, indicates that the student respondents faced challenges in this area. With a frequency of 19 correct answers, representing 46.34% of the total responses, the resulting transmuted score was 71. According to the provided interpretation, this level of performance "Did Not Meet Expectations." This suggests that most students did not correctly identify the concept of pronouns tested in this question, highlighting a potential weakness in their understanding of this part of speech. Therefore, further review and instruction on pronouns may be beneficial for this group of students.

The collective performance of the student respondents on Questions 14 through 23, which centered on verbs as a part of speech, indicates a general lack of mastery in this grammatical area. Across these ten questions, a total of 181 correct answers were recorded, resulting in an average percentage of 44.15% and a corresponding transmuted score of 71. The overall performance interpretation is "Did Not Meet Expectations," indicating that, on average, students struggled with the verb-related concepts assessed. This outcome suggests that a substantial portion of the respondents need further instruction and reinforcement on

various aspects of verbs to improve their understanding and application of this fundamental part of speech.

The collective performance on Questions 14 through 23, which assessed various aspects of verbs, confirms a systemic lack of mastery, with the resulting average correct rate of 44.15% interpreted as "Did Not Meet Expectations." This pervasive difficulty with verb-related concepts is a clear indicator of a learning difficulty that demands targeted educational solutions. As Sorohiti et al. (2024) emphasized, effective grammar instruction relies heavily on a teacher's awareness and proper identification of such difficulties to implement successful teaching strategies. Therefore, the data empirically validate the necessity of comprehensive and strategic instructional reinforcement to solidify students' comprehension and application of this fundamental part of speech.

The collective performance of the student respondents on Questions 24-27, which assessed their understanding of conjunctions as a part of speech, was remarkably strong. Across these four questions, a total of 152 correct answers were recorded, resulting in an average of 92.68% and a corresponding transmuted score of 95. The overall performance is "Outstanding," indicating that the students, as a group, have a very good grasp of the conjunction concepts tested. This suggests that the students have a solid understanding of how to use and identify conjunctions within sentences.

The students' performance on Questions 24 through 27, which assessed conjunctions, was notably successful, achieving a high 92.68% average correct rate and an "Outstanding" interpretation. This high level of mastery demonstrates a solid grasp of conjunction concepts (External Research on Parts of Speech). This success is important, as conjunctions are critical function words that enable students to logically connect sentence components, a vital skill for more complex written and spoken communication (External Research on Parts of Speech). This outcome thus validates that the instructional strategies used for these easily defined, discrete concepts were highly effective, underscoring the positive impact of proper teacher awareness and successful teaching strategies on grammar mastery (Sorohiti et al, 2024).

The collective performance of the student respondents on Questions 28 through 31, which assessed their understanding of determiners as a part of speech, was excellent. Across these four questions, a total of 140 correct answers were recorded, resulting in a high average percentage of 85.37% and a corresponding transmuted score of 90. The interpretation of this overall performance is "Outstanding," indicating that the students, as a group, have a strong command of the determiner concepts that

were tested. This suggests that the students have a solid understanding of how to use and identify determiners within sentences.

The assessment of Questions 28 through 31 on determiners reveals a strong success story, with the 85.37% average correct rate earning an "Outstanding" evaluation. This high level of mastery directly validates the students' grammatical competence, signifying a robust capacity to comprehend and construct grammatically sound sentences in this domain (Sioco & De Vera, 2018). As determiners are crucial function words that establish clarity and specificity for nouns in discourse, this solid understanding is a vital building block for more advanced communication skills. The strong result here contrasts favorably with other areas of difficulty, suggesting that the concepts tested were acquired successfully by the majority of the student group.

The collective performance of the student respondents on Questions 32 through 35, which assessed their understanding of modal verbs as a part of speech, indicates a "fairly satisfactory" level of comprehension. Across these four questions, a total of 110 correct answers were recorded, resulting in an average percentage of 67.07% and a corresponding transmuted score of 79. This suggests that while a majority of the students have a basic understanding of modal verbs, there is still potential for them to deepen their knowledge and improve their accuracy in this area of grammar. Further review and practice could help solidify their understanding of modal verbs.

The assessment of Questions 32 through 35, which focused on modal verbs, yielded a 67.07% average correct rate, resulting in a "Fairly Satisfactory" interpretation. While this score suggests a basic understanding of this closed-class system, the moderate result indicates that students are likely struggling with the subtle semantic differences or more complex applications. This pattern of partial mastery is a common teaching problem, as Rahmotullah (2020) noted that persistent, deep-seated difficulties in foundational grammar points demand specific analysis and focused solutions. Addressing this gap is crucial, as the failure to achieve full mastery of such concepts can lead to fossilization—where incorrect patterns become fixed in the learner's language system. Therefore, focused practice is essential to ensure that this basic understanding is successfully integrated into their productive grammar, thus supporting the need for teacher awareness and effective teaching strategies (Sorohiti et al., 2024).

Table 4 Emergent and Clustered Themes of the Teachers' Lived Experiences

Emergent Theme 1: Multifaceted Influence on Grammar Acquisition
Theme 1: The Paradoxical Implications of Incidental Learning
Theme 2: L1 Interference as a Persistent
Theme 3: Direct and Indirect Learning
Theme 4: Interaction and Engagement for Deeper Understanding
Theme 5: Interplay of Knowledge and Confidence

The qualitative data collection involved conducting in-depth interviews with five (5) English teachers to gain insights into their lived experiences and pedagogical strategies. The analysis process used thematic analysis, in which the researcher meticulously reviewed the interview transcripts and formulated meaning from significant statements to identify commonalities among the responses, ultimately leading to the creation of emergent and clustered themes.

This approach significantly strengthens the research findings for several reasons. First, using a homogeneous group of five expert teachers as key informants is generally considered an appropriate sample size for achieving thematic saturation in qualitative studies, ensuring the collected data is rich and in-depth. Second, the process of finding commonality validates the themes not as individual opinions, but as shared professional reality regarding effective strategies (e.g., Direct and Indirect Learning) or prevalent challenges (e.g., L1 Interference). This process ensures that the themes are grounded in the collective, real-world context of English language teaching at the University of Cebu Pardo and Talisay, Inc.

The creation of themes based on the convergence of expert responses directly enhances the trustworthiness and transferability of the study. This thematic approach is consistent with established qualitative methods that prioritize depth of understanding over statistical generalization (Creswell, 2013). By grounding the themes in practitioners' common experience, the findings move from mere observation to pedagogical prescriptions. As noted in the literature, teacher-derived insights are critical because "effective instructors can impact their pupils' success in a variety of ways," making their consensus on effective practice highly valuable for other educators

(Palou, 2020). Furthermore, the emergent themes—such as the influence of the first language (L1) on grammar acquisition—directly support existing academic literature, demonstrating that the teachers' experiences align with broader theoretical challenges in second language learning.

Table 5 Emergent and Clustered Themes of the Students' Lived Experiences

Emergent Theme 2: Multifaceted Nature of English Grammar Acquisition
Theme 2.1: How Experience and Deep Involvement Shape Us
Theme 2.2: The Influence of the First Language L1
Theme 2.3: Impact of Explicit Instruction and Learning Strategies

The qualitative phase of the study, based on in-depth interviews with nine (9) student participants, yielded Emergent Theme 2: Multifaceted Nature of English Grammar Acquisition. This theme was developed by the researcher after identifying a commonality across students' responses regarding their grammar learning experiences and challenges.

The emergence of the term "multifaceted nature" is highly significant, as it moves the study beyond the identification of single, isolated problems. It indicates that grammar competence is not influenced by a single variable but by a complex interplay of internal and external factors, as consistently expressed by the participants. The fact that this theme was synthesized from the common experiences of nine students validates its relevance and centrality to the learners' reality. This theme implies that effective instruction must address several dimensions concurrently: the student's personal cognitive baggage (e.g., L1 influence), their affective state (e.g., confidence/anxiety), and the quality of their learning environment (e.g., instructional strategies and exposure). The commonality found suggests that, regardless of individual differences, all participants recognize grammar acquisition as a holistic challenge shaped by multiple, often interacting, factors.

This qualitative finding strongly corroborates established literature in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) concerning the complexity of mastering English grammar. Aizawa et al. (2020) highlighted that English grammar, with its intricacies, exceptions, and variants, presents a major challenge for students, confirming its inherent complexity. Furthermore, the study's theoretical foundation, the Dunn and Dunn Learning Styles Model, supports the theme by acknowledging that learning is a complex process influenced by a multidimensional

array of emotional, sociological, and environmental factors, all of which contribute to the multifaceted nature observed. The literature explicitly states that L2 learning is influenced by both cognitive factors (such as L1 interference) and affective factors (such as confidence and motivation), which collectively support the researcher's synthesis of a theme that combines all these elements.

Discussions of Qualitative Data

The qualitative analysis of the lived experiences of English teachers and students yielded two central, highly convergent themes. The teachers' interviews converged on Emergent Theme 1: Multifaceted Influence on Grammar Acquisition, reflecting their professional consensus that mastering grammar is a complex process affected by various interconnected elements, including instructional methods, L1 interference, and the balance between knowledge and confidence. This theme was synthesized from the consistent challenges and effective strategies reported by the educators, who collectively recognized the need for diverse approaches such as direct or indirect learning and encouraging interaction for deeper comprehension.

Similarly, the student interviews yielded Emergent Theme 2: Multifaceted Nature of English Grammar Acquisition, identifying a strong commonality across the nine learners' perspectives: grammar competence is not a singular issue, but a challenge shaped by a complex of internal factors -influence and experience, and external factors-explicit instruction and strategies. The convergence of findings in both groups- teachers perceiving a "Multifaceted Influence" and students experiencing a "Multifaceted Nature" -underscored the critical finding of the study. English grammar acquisition is a holistic, multi-dimensional process that requires interventions addressing the cognitive, affective, and linguistic variables simultaneously. The following are themes that emerged from the interview data.

Emergent Theme 1: Multifaceted Influence on Grammar Acquisition

Several key themes concerning grammar acquisition emerged from the data. The role of input is complex, as learners are influenced by multifaceted sources, including both formal instruction and informal exposure, which present paradoxical implications for learning. Learners' first language can also exert a persistent influence on their acquisition of English grammar. Effective grammar instruction involves a combination of explicit and implicit learning strategies. Furthermore, interaction and engagement are crucial for a deeper understanding. Finally, the interplay between knowledge and confidence is significant, as learners' self-assurance

can affect their ability to use and develop their grammatical skills effectively.

Theme 1: The Paradoxical Implications of Incidental Learning

Incidental learning demonstrates that substantial knowledge and skills can be acquired unintentionally through engagement in other activities. This seemingly passive process can lead to surprisingly effective learning outcomes, sometimes rivaling intentional learning, particularly in vocabulary acquisition and tacit knowledge. However, its effectiveness can vary depending on factors like attention, exposure, and the specificity of the learning goals (Kerka, 2000). Participant 1 said, "Listening to songs can help students understand the use of informal language and colloquialisms, which can make them more aware of how grammar functions in real-life communication." This statement was supported when Participant 4 said that "this repeated exposure can make grammatical patterns feel more natural and intuitive, even if they can't explicitly explain the rule."

Listening to songs exposes students to informal language and colloquialisms, enhancing their awareness of real-world grammar. Repeated exposure to songs can also make grammatical patterns feel natural and intuitive, even without explicit rule knowledge. Research on language acquisition supports the idea that authentic input, such as music, improves vocabulary and implicit understanding (Bokiev et al., 2018).

Theme 2: L1 Interference as a Persistent

L1 interference, or language transfer, refers to the persistent influence of a learner's native language (L1) on their second language (L2) acquisition, often leading to errors (Alisoy, 2024). This ongoing impact of L1 patterns on L2 production and comprehension is a key aspect of language learning. Participant 4 emphasized that "When the grammatical structures of a student's L1 align with English, it can act as a springboard. For instance, if a student's L1 also follows a Subject-Verb-Agreement (SVA) word order for basic sentences, they often grasp this fundamental English structure more quickly. This positive transfer can accelerate their initial sentence formation. This is where the L1's grammar rules differ from English, leading to errors. Students might unconsciously apply their L1's grammatical patterns to English. For example, if their L1 doesn't have articles (like "a" or "the"), they might consistently omit them in English, even after explicit instruction. The use of prepositions to indicate location, time, and relationships is often language-specific, leading to frequent mistakes." Participant 1 also said that "If the L1 shares structural similarities with English, such as sentence structure or verb conjugation,

students may find it easier to grasp similar grammatical concepts.”

When a student's first language (L1) shares grammatical structures with English, such as subject-verb agreement, it can facilitate positive transfer, enabling faster comprehension of those English rules. Conversely, differences in grammatical structures, such as the absence of articles or varied preposition usage in the L1, often lead to negative transfer, resulting in common English errors. Shared structural similarities between the L1 and English, such as basic sentence order or verb conjugation, can ease the learning of corresponding English grammatical concepts.

Theme 3: Direct and Indirect Learning

Explicit learning is conscious, intentional learning through instruction and rules, while implicit learning is unconscious acquisition through exposure and practice, as highlighted by Souvik (2023). Both are vital: explicit for foundational knowledge, implicit for intuitive skill development. It was pointed out by participant 2 that “A balanced approach incorporating both inductive and deductive elements is often most successful, catering to diverse learning styles. This contextualized and balanced approach fosters better retention and application of grammar rules in real-world communication.” However, participants 3, 4, and 5 argued that “actively engaging students through fun, low-pressure activities like grammar games and role-playing enhances retention and provides practical application, which aligns well with an inductive “discovery” approach that fosters critical thinking, analysis, and deeper understanding through student-led unraveling, positioning teachers as facilitators in this process.”

A balanced approach that combines inductive “discovery” with deductive instruction caters to different learning styles and promotes better retention and real-world application of grammar. While active engagement through inductive methods like games and role-playing fosters critical thinking and deeper understanding by allowing students to unravel concepts themselves with the teacher as a facilitator, a blend of both approaches is often most effective for comprehensive learning, as stressed by Varsat (2023).

Theme 4: Interaction and Engagement for Deeper Understanding

Interaction and engagement in learning go beyond passive reception, fostering deeper understanding through active participation, discussion, and collaboration. When students actively engage with the material and each other, they process information more thoroughly, connect it to existing knowledge, and build stronger neural pathways,

leading to improved retention and the ability to apply what they've learned, as emphasized by Seril (2025). Participant 4 mentioned that “Students often find interaction-based activities more engaging and motivating than traditional grammar exercises. The dynamic nature of group work, role-play, and discussions can break the monotony of rote learning, making grammar practice feel more relevant and enjoyable. Subsequently, participants 2 and 3 said that “students generally react well to interactive grammar activities, finding them engaging and motivating, which significantly boosts their grammar skills through authentic language use and peer feedback, leading to deeper understanding compared to passive methods. While some may initially find it challenging, especially with English, these activities effectively foster cooperation, collaboration, and new insights and ultimately enhance confidence and self-esteem.” Participant 5 also highlighted that “For some students, especially those who are less confident in their English abilities, the pressure of individual performance is lessened in group settings. They might feel more comfortable experimenting with language and taking risks when working with peers.”

Students often find interactive grammar activities more engaging and motivating than traditional exercises, as the dynamic nature of group work and role-play makes practice more relevant and enjoyable, ultimately boosting grammar skills through authentic use and peer feedback. This collaborative environment can also reduce pressure for less confident students, encouraging them to experiment with language and take risks in a supportive setting, as stressed by Du and Nguyen (2023).

Theme 5: Interplay of Knowledge and Confidence

Knowledge and confidence have a reciprocal relationship: strong knowledge builds confidence, while confidence encourages learning and risk-taking, as participant 3 brought out that “students are rich in ideas in mind but afraid to express them due to errors. Despite engaging in interactive discussions and activities, many students remain hesitant to share their ideas and speak up because they are worried about being judged or criticized for their English language skills.”

Despite having many ideas and participating in interactive activities, students often hesitate to express themselves due to fear of judgment or criticism regarding their English language skills (Pabro–Macquidato, 2021).

Emergent Theme 2: Multifaceted Nature of English Grammar Acquisition

English grammar acquisition is a complex process influenced by a student's first language (L1), the amount and quality of their exposure to English, and the teaching approaches employed.

Theme 2.1: How Experience and Deep Involvement Shape Us

Exposure and immersion are powerful forces in language acquisition, providing learners with extensive contact with the target language in meaningful contexts (Apoko & Waluyo, 2025). Consistent exposure to authentic language across sources such as conversations, media, and real-life situations fosters natural vocabulary acquisition, improves listening comprehension, and enhances understanding of cultural nuances. Participants 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, and 14 highlighted that “learning English can happen through various forms of exposure, such as the internet and childhood cartoons, where increased exposure leads to greater learning. Educational settings also contribute, and consistently hearing correct usage helps the brain develop an intuitive sense of what sounds right, fostering an awareness of real-life grammar. This constant immersion, including conversations with English speakers, watching movies, and reading, builds a foundational understanding of English, even without explicit knowledge of the rules.”

This highlights the significant role of passive and active exposure in English language acquisition. Learning can occur incidentally through enjoyable media like the internet and cartoons, demonstrating that consistent input, even without focused study, contributes to language development. Furthermore, formal education and active engagement through listening, speaking, and reading reinforce this learning, allowing the brain to internalize correct patterns and develop an intuitive grasp of English grammar and usage, often preceding the ability to articulate the underlying rules.

Theme 2.2: The Influence of the First Language L1

The influence of a student's first language (L1) significantly shapes their acquisition of English, acting as both a facilitator when L1 structures align with English and a source of interference when grammatical rules differ. This interplay of positive and negative transfer impacts various aspects of English learning, including grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, and understanding this influence is crucial for effective teaching strategies (Hussain, 2023).

“.....because English was not their first language (Bisaya), expressing thoughts initially posed a challenge, and their native language did not readily facilitate English grammar development.” This statement was brought out by participants 6, 7, and 8. However, participants 6 and 8 highlighted as well that “through consistent practice, vocabulary expansion, and attention to sentence structure, the initial difficulty in expressing thoughts due to English not being the first language gradually improved, leading to

increased confidence in both written and spoken communication, despite the occasional unconscious application of the native language rules, demonstrating a continuous learning process.”

Participants whose first language was not English initially found it challenging to express their thoughts, as the structure of their native language did not readily support English grammar acquisition. However, consistent effort through practice, vocabulary building, and focusing on English sentence structure led to gradual improvement and increased confidence in both speaking and writing, even with the occasional influence of their first language. This highlights the persistence of L1 influence alongside the positive impact of dedicated learning strategies.

Theme 2.3: Impact of Explicit Instruction and Learning Strategies

Explicit instruction, in which grammar rules are directly explained and modeled, provides learners with a foundational understanding. Complementing this, effective learning strategies, such as active engagement through games and real-world application, enhance retention and deeper comprehension, as explained by Varsat (2023).

“...actively engaging learning strategies, where teachers clearly explain the 'why' behind sentence structure using visuals and real-life examples, significantly improves understanding and retention for active learners. Interactive activities like games and group work make learning fun and less stressful, fostering deeper comprehension through practical application and peer feedback, ultimately making grammar lessons more meaningful and applicable to real communication,” said participants 6, 7, 11, 13, and 14.

Active learning strategies enhance understanding, retention, and practical application of English grammar. This approach is highly effective for active learners through clear explanations, visual aids, real-world examples, and interactive activities, making the process meaningful and enjoyable.

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, effective English language learning is a multifaceted process that thrives on a balanced approach. Incidental learning through authentic exposure, like music, contributes significantly to an intuitive understanding of the language, particularly in vocabulary and real-world usage. However, the learner's first language plays a crucial role, acting as both a facilitator through positive transfer and a source of errors through negative transfer, necessitating teaching strategies that address these influences. A combination of explicit grammar instruction and implicit learning through engaging, interactive

activities appears to be the most successful pedagogical approach, catering to diverse learning styles and promoting deeper understanding and retention. Creating a supportive and collaborative learning environment is also vital, as it fosters confidence and encourages learners to actively participate and take risks without fear of judgment. Furthermore, consistent exposure and immersion in the target language provide essential real-world context, aiding natural acquisition. While the first language can present initial challenges, dedicated learning strategies focused on practice and sentence structure lead to gradual improvement. Ultimately, an integrated approach that blends explicit teaching with opportunities for implicit learning within an encouraging and immersive environment is paramount for successful English language acquisition.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

Curriculum Development: Develop a curriculum framework that acknowledges learners' first language. This could include identifying common areas of negative transfer for specific L1 groups and incorporating targeted activities and explanations to proactively address these challenges.

Teachers' Training: Equip educators with the essential skills to transform explicit language instruction into dynamic and engaging learning experiences.

Future Researchers: Undertake longitudinal studies to assess the sustained effects of combining explicit grammar instruction with interactive, implicit learning activities on learners' overall English proficiency and retention. This would provide valuable insights into the most effective long-term teaching strategies.

Differentiated English Learning Handout: The creation of a differentiated English learning handout with various English grammar inferences that the educator is intentionally designing instruction to address individual differences in student readiness and learning profiles, promoting more effective and personalized grammar acquisition.

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